## THE GAUGE QUESTION AND THE DEFUNCT RAILWAY BOARD.

We mentioned in our last impression, that Government had appointed a commission to inquire into the expediency and practicability of securing a uniform gauge in the construction of railroads. The subject at the first glance will, with many persons, appear to be a difficult one, the bearings of the question however, are within extremely narrow limits. The gauge or breadth between the rails is upon American railways 4 feet 6 inches; upon Irish, 5 feet 3 inches. The Liverpool and Manchester Railway Company fixed their gauge at 4 feet 8½ inches. Other railways adopted the same breadth. Mr. Brunel introduced the first exception. Upon the line of the Great Western, 7 feet 6inches were left between the rails. With this single exception, the narrow gauge was universal. In process of time, the rival lines were united by other railways, and then the evil resulting from a want of uniformity in the gauge was experienced. Trains constructed to ply the narrow gauge could not run right on along the broad, and *vice versa*. This rendered necessary the frequent shifting and transferring of passengers and luggage. The question now arises, is it expedient to avoid this evil by enforcing uniformity of gauge, and if so, what gauge must yield?

If the narrow gauge be finally adopted, it is pleaded that great risk of life and limb will be incurred. A certain speed of train is alleged to require a certain breadth of rail. If, to shun this evil, the narrow gauge be sacrificed to the broad, a vast expenditure of capital and labour is indispensably demanded. The narrow gauge extends over 2,000 miles of way the broad gauge over 300 miles only; 2,000 miles, therefore, must be altered to suffer 300 miles to remain unaltered.

If the broad gauge be compelled to conform to the narrow, only the rails require to be lifted, and the carriages slightly altered. In the other case, embankments must be reformed, tunnels widened, bridges broadened, and carriages made anew. It is also strongly denied that experience demonstrates higher risk of life and limb upon the narrow gauge.

Such is the nature and bearings of the question which the Royal Commissioners have to investigate and decide upon. Much speculation and uneasiness prevail with respect to the issue.

Since our last number went to press, Lord Dalhousie has delivered himself of the painful duty of pronouncing an *éloge* on the defunct railway board over which it has been his misfortune to preside. His Lordship stated, that "the Government having maturely considered the question, and having due regard to the constitution and operations of the committees of the House of Commons, and to the feeling which had been evinced by Parliament in the course of the present session, had come to the conclusion, that the Board of Trade should not in future prepare or submit to Parliament any report upon the merits of railway projects." He further said, that "the same preliminary steps on the part of railway companies which were now required, such as depositing with the Board of Trade a copy of the plan and a statement of the objects of the bill, would continue to be required. They would also be expected to deliver a copy of the bill when prepared; and if upon the examination of its provisions it should appear to the Board of Trade to be desirable, on public grounds, to direct the attention of Parliament to the nature of those provisions, the Board of Trade would be at liberty to submit to Parliament a report upon the subject, but in no case to pronounce any opinion upon the merits of the bill."

The determination of Government on this subject appears to have given universal satisfaction.

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COGHLAN'S GUIDE BOOK FOR TRAVELLERS.—Now that our friends in "populous cities pent," town-wearied, are about to fly hastily to various parts of the world to get fresh ideas and health, we cannot do better than introduce to their notice Mr. Coghlan's extended guide book. Whether they propose examining the modern buildings of France, the town walls of Belgium, the cathedrals of Germany, or, later in the season, the glories of old Rome, they will find it a most serviceable companion.

## NATIONAL EXHIBITION OF MANUFACTURES.

We mentioned some time ago that the committee of the Society of Arts, Adelphi, proposed to establish an exhibition of the products of British industry. They have now issued a preliminary prospectus soliciting promises of assistance from artists, engineers, manufacturers and others. The prospectus says justly: — Besides the delight and instruction which would certainly be afforded, it may fairly be expected that a periodical competition of this nature will exert some beneficial effect on the progress of the arts; not only by exciting honourable rivalry in the producers, but by enabling the consumers better to appreciate real excellence. The present moment seems particularly auspicious for making such an attempt. The triumphant success of two especially British products; the railway and the locomotive, has so united the remotest parts of these islands, that the exhibition, though taking place in the metropolis, would be rendered available to all persons, in all places; and would therefore be divested of much of that exclusiveness which might otherwise be objected to such a scheme.

Without entering into details, it may be stated, that the plan embraces the exhibition not merely of *products*, but of the *instruments* of production in actual work — the facility, rapidity, precision, and economy of the act of fabrication, being often much more wonderful than the fabric itself. In carrying out these ideas, it is intended entirely to exclude all private, personal, and political objects. It is hoped that the plan may be preserved so free from objection on these points, as to command the approbation of all ranks, and justify its promoters in anticipating the highest patronage.

Parties willing to assist in carrying out the proposition are invited to communicate with Mr. Whishaw, the secretary.

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## FREEMASONS OF THE CHURCH.

JULY 8.—The Rev. G. Pocock, L.L.B., in the chair. The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. Mr. William J. Short, architect, and the Rev. F. Wrench, rector of Stowting, were elected members. The Right Hon. the Earl Cadogan exhibited one of the columns of the bedstead of Pope Leo X.; an Italian carving of Arimimia, and a carving of Rubens' Battle of the Bridge. Mr. G. Field exhibited the four seasons carved in boxwood by a Flemish artist of the seventeenth century, also a medal in carved wood of the sixteenth century, containing Greek and Latin inscriptions. Mr. B. Hertz exhibited a carved spoon of ancient Egyptian workmanship, a ram's head in ebony, a deer's leg in cedar wood, &c. Mr. J. W. Archer exhibited a monumental brass, enriched with enamelling of various colours, now being executed by him, and dedicated to the memory of Lieut. Colonel White by the officers of the Inniskilling dragoons. Mr. W. H. Rogers presented some impressions of seals of the middle ages from the seal of Boxgrove priory, Nutley Abbey, Bucks, and from the seal of the vicarage of Salisbury.

Mr. W. G. Rogers then delivered a lecture on wood-carving, and illustrated it with carvings of all ages. He commenced by referring to the neglect of the study of the art, and explained the difference between carving in wood and in stone. There is no branch of art which offers a larger field for investigation than the neglected subject of wood-carving. Disregarded to too great an extent by the architects and sculptors of our own country, and scarcely considered worthy a place in its literature, its history contains facts of the greatest interest. The high antiquity of the art of carving in timber was referred to, and a glance given at its history from the earliest ages, tracing its progress among the Egyptians, Syrians, Jews, and its cultivation amongst the Greeks and Romans. Mr. Rogers endeavoured to account for the absence of Etruscan carvings, and enumerated a few works of Oriental character. The impulse given to the art by christianity was noticed, and great stress laid on the extent to which carving in wood had been carried by the Norman and gothic architects. He noticed a remarkable work of the former period in box-wood, in the cabinet of Mr. Cavan. The advantages and disadvantages of the "Renaissance" were fully explained, and the pagan character of the wood-carvings of the period alluded to. After a few remarks on the loss of style, followed a catalogue of the principal carvings of antiquity, and those which in more modern times have gained the greatest celebrity. For instance, the lives of Demontreul, the great wood-carver to the court of Marie Antoinette, Birbeck, the English, French, and Dutch carvers employed on the decorations of St. Paul's Cathedral, were severally noticed, and their works reviewed, not forgetting Grinling Gibbons, his works, his merits, his boxwood portrait of Charles II. in the Earl of Orford's cabinet, &c. The concluding remarks were on wood-carving at the present day, giving reasons for its decline, noticing carvings by machinery, and referring to the inventions and patents relating to the art.

After the lecture, Mr. Payne explained his process of injecting timber with a solution of iron, and exhibited numerous specimens which occasioned much discussion.

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## SAVINGS BANKS.

THE following comparative statement of progress, at specified periods, during the last seven years, has been forwarded to us by the secretary of the St. Marylebone Bank for Savings:

| | Open Deposit Account. | Sums invested with National Debt Commissioners. |
|---|---|---|
| | £. | £. |
| On the 5th July, 1839.. | 11,630 | 216,617 |
| " " 1840.. | 12,445 | 243,649 |
| " " 1841.. | 13,481 | 260,882 |
| " " 1842.. | 13,106 | 275,072 |
| " " 1843.. | 13,990 | 294,388 |
| " " 1844.. | 14,830 | 308,169 |
| " " 1845.. | 15,704 | 324,264 |

Mr. G. R. Porter, in a sketch of the progress and present extent of Savings Banks in the United Kingdom, read at Cambridge, stated that these institutions owed their origin to Miss Priscilla Wakefield, who in 1804 induced six gentlemen residing at Tottenham to receive deposits from labourers and servants, [illegible] 5 per cent as interest. Four years later [illegible] persons, four of whom were ladies, took upon themselves the same responsibility at [illegible]. The first savings bank regularly organised was formed at Ruthwell, Dumfriesshire; its success led to many imitations, so that before any legislative provision had been made for their management, there were seventy savings banks in England, four in Wales, and four in Ireland. In 1817 an act was passed to encourage banks of savings in England and Ireland, but it was not extended to Scotland until 1835. Of the value of these institutions there can hardly be two opinions.

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## TERRA COTTA CHURCH, BOLTON-LE-MOORS.

THE church of St. Stephen and All Martyrs, in the new parish of Leverbridge, Bolton-le-Moors, which is built entirely of *terra cotta*, from designs by Mr. E. Sharpe, as already mentioned in our pages, was consecrated on the 26th ultimo, by the Lord Bishop of Chester. The ground plan is cruciform, and at the west end is a tower, surmounted by an octagon, and a beautiful spire of open tracery, after the manner of Fribergh cathedral. The church has two entrances, the principal one at the west, and a small south one under the window of the south transept. The nave is paved with unglazed, and the chancel with encaustic, tiles. The font is a large basin of stone, enclosed in solid panels of *terra cotta*. The pulpit is at the angle of the chancel and north transept. The pews are low and open, with bench-ends and poppy-heads moulded in *terra cotta*, and painted. The north and south walls of the chancel are ornamented by an arcade below, with seats used as sedilia, and above by recesses with canopies. The east and west windows, and the tracery of all the windows, are filled with rich stained glass. The east window is by Willement, and the west (a memorial window to the Rev. George Langshaw, late Fellow of St. John's College), by Wailes, and is seen through a tower arch. The cornices and mouldings are enriched with texts; the chief of which are John vi. 53; Rev. xix., 9; Isa. lxiii., 5, 6; Wis. iii. 1—5; Rev. xx. 12; Matt. xi. 28.

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